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η' Mass and Chiral Symmetry Breaking at Large N_c and N_f

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Abstract

We propose a method for implementing the large- N_c , large- N_f limit of QCD at the effective Lagrangian level. Depending on the value of the ratio N_f/N_c , different patterns of chiral symmetry breaking can arise, leading in particular to different behaviors of the η' -mass in the combined large- N limit.

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1. Large- N_c considerations successfully explain many non-perturbative aspects of confining gauge theories [1,2]. However, there are at least two exceptions -both related to a strong OZI rule violation- in which the $1/N_c$ expansion apparently fails: (i) In the scalar channel the spectrum is not dominated by a nonet of ideally mixed states and chiral symmetry breaking exhibits an important dependence on the number N_f of light quark flavors [3]; (ii) At large N_c , the η' -field becomes massless due to its relation to the U(1) anomaly while Nature realizes it like a heavy state. In this note we reconsider these problems in the limit in which both N_f and N_c tend to infinity with fixed ratio [4]. Since, at least at lowest orders of perturbation theory, the (rescaled) QCD β -function (with $g^2 N_c \equiv \text{const.}$) only depends on the ratio N_f/N_c , we might expect that the hadronic spectrum resembles the physical one, in particular with chiral symmetry breakdown and $\Lambda_H \sim 1$ GeV. On the other hand, several hints (*e.g.* from the study of the conformal window, in QCD and its supersymmetric version), suggest a non trivial phase structure of the theory as a function of N_f and N_c . One can in principle distinguish three different phases, characterized by different symmetries of the vacuum, depending on the ratio N_f/N_c : (a) for low N_f/N_c only the $SU_V(N_f)$ remains unbroken; (b) for higher N_f/N_c the vacuum is invariant under a larger group, $SU_V(N_f) \times Z_{\text{chiral}}(N_f)$, where $Z_{\text{chiral}}(N_f)$ is the center of the chiral symmetry group $SU_L(N_f) \times SU_R(N_f)$ [5,6]; (c) for high N_f/N_c no spontaneous symmetry breaking takes place (and hence no confinement) and the symmetry of the vacuum is the whole $SU_L(N_f) \times SU_R(N_f)$. Notice that case (b) corresponds to the maximal possible symmetry of the vacuum in a confining vector-like theory. The existence of this phase is an assumption related to the issue of the non-perturbative renormalization of the bare Weingarten's inequalities comparing axial-axial and pseudoscalar-pseudoscalar two point functions [6,7]. We model the combined large- N_f , large- N_c limit by adding to the usual light flavors $q = (u, d, s)$, a set of N auxiliary flavors $Q = (Q_1, \dots, Q_N)$ of common mass $M \gg m_q$, but still $M \ll \Lambda_H$. This mass M should be considered sufficiently small so that a power series expansion makes sense, but simultaneously much larger than any of the light quark masses m_q , thus the auxiliary fields can be integrated out at sufficiently low-energy. We then formally deal with $N_f = N + 3 \equiv n \rightarrow \infty$

flavors, but only the three lightest ones are physical. The rôle of these auxiliary flavors should be analogous to the one of the strange quark, when one considers the $SU(2) \times SU(2)$ chiral dynamics of u and d quarks.

2. Let N_f/N_c be subcritical, so that we are in the $Z_{\text{chiral}}(n)$ -asymmetric phase. The $n^2 - 1$ (pseudo) Goldstone bosons (GB) can be collected in a matrix $\hat{U}(x) \in SU(n)$, (hereafter $n \times n$ matrices will be denoted by a hat) and their low-energy dynamics can be described by the effective Lagrangian

$$\mathcal{L}_{\text{sub}} = \frac{F^2}{4} \left\{ \langle D_\mu \hat{U} D^\mu \hat{U}^\dagger \rangle + 2B_0 \langle \hat{U}^\dagger \hat{\chi} + \hat{\chi}^\dagger \hat{U} \rangle \right\}. \quad (1)$$

where $\hat{\chi}$ is the scalar-pseudoscalar source,

$$\mathcal{L}_{\hat{\chi}}^{\text{QCD}} = -\bar{\Psi}_L \hat{\chi} \Psi_R - \bar{\Psi}_R \hat{\chi}^\dagger \Psi_L, \quad \Psi = \begin{pmatrix} q \\ Q \end{pmatrix}, \quad (2)$$

and $\langle \dots \rangle$ denotes flavor trace. The $n \times n$ source matrix will be chosen as

$$\hat{\chi} = \begin{pmatrix} \chi & \mathbf{0} \\ \mathbf{0} & M e^{i\theta/N} \mathbf{1}_{N \times N} \end{pmatrix}, \quad (3)$$

where χ is the 3×3 light quark source (mass term), θ is the vacuum angle and M is real and positive. Notice that there are no sources attached to the N auxiliary flavors and the corresponding GB degrees of freedom are frozen: in the tree approximation the $n \times n$ GB field matrix becomes

$$\hat{U} = \begin{pmatrix} U e^{i\varphi/3} & \mathbf{0} \\ \mathbf{0} & e^{-i\varphi/N} \mathbf{1}_{N \times N} \end{pmatrix} \in SU(n), \quad (4)$$

where $U \in SU(3)$ collects the eight physical GB fields. The remaining $U(1)$ field φ will be interpreted as the η' -field: for $\chi = m \mathbf{1}_{3 \times 3}$ (no mixing),

$$\eta' = F \sqrt{\frac{n}{6N}} \varphi \quad (5)$$

and the corresponding mass, for $m = 0$ is

$$M_{\eta'}^2 = \frac{6B_0 M}{n} \rightarrow 0, \quad (6)$$

which vanishes in the (combined) large- N limit. Hence, *in this phase*, η' -mass behaves as in the standard $N_c \rightarrow \infty$, N_f -fixed limit.

3. For higher N_f/N_c we expect the $Z_{\text{chiral}}(n)$ -symmetric phase to occur: the vacuum is symmetric under

$$\Psi_{L,R} \rightarrow e^{2\pi i \frac{k_{L,R}}{n}} \Psi_{L,R}, \quad k_{L,R} = 1, \dots, n-1, \quad (7)$$

in addition to the usual $SU_V(n)$. Notice that this $Z_{\text{chiral}}(n)$ is also a subgroup of the (anomalous) $U_L(1) \times U_R(1)$. This additional symmetry of the vacuum finds its natural interpretation within the effective theory described by the Lagrangian $\mathcal{L}(\hat{U}, \hat{\chi}, \theta)$. The GB field $\hat{U}(x) \in SU(n)$ is usually understood as simply connected to $\mathbf{1}$: $\hat{U}(x) = \mathbf{1} + i\varphi_a(x)T^a + \dots$ and, in the corresponding effective theory, the integration measure $\mathcal{D}\hat{U}$ is treated accordingly. However $SU(n)$ is *not* simply connected. We are free to choose an integration measure treating all sectors of $SU(n)$ alike:

$$\int \mathcal{D}\hat{U} e^{i \int dx \mathcal{L}(\hat{U}, \hat{\chi}, \theta)} \rightarrow \int \mathcal{D}\hat{U} \sum_{k=0}^{n-1} e^{i \int dx \mathcal{L}(\hat{U} e^{-2\pi i k/n}, \hat{\chi}, \theta)}, \quad (8)$$

where \hat{U} and $\mathcal{D}\hat{U}$ again concern the connected vicinity of $\mathbf{1}$. This freedom derives from the fact that an effective theory is merely constrained by Ward identities (WI), which fix its *local* but not its global aspects. In particular the usual solution of the anomalous $U(1)$ WI only guarantees $\mathcal{L}(\hat{U}, \hat{\chi}, \theta) = \mathcal{L}(\hat{U}, \hat{\chi} e^{i\theta/n})$ for $\theta \sim 0$. However, under the $Z_{\text{chiral}}(n)$ transformation one has

$$\mathcal{L}(\hat{U} e^{-\frac{2\pi i k}{n}}, \hat{\chi} e^{i\theta/n}) = \mathcal{L}(\hat{U}, \hat{\chi} e^{i\frac{\theta+2\pi k}{n}}), \quad (9)$$

i.e. the above prescription (8) *restores the 2π -periodicity* in the vacuum angle [8]. The $Z_{\text{chiral}}(n)$ -symmetry of the vacuum expressed in terms of a local Lagrangian amounts to the constraint

$$\mathcal{L}(\hat{U}e^{-\frac{2\pi ik}{n}}, \hat{\chi}, \theta) = \mathcal{L}(\hat{U}, \hat{\chi}, \theta) = \mathcal{L}(\hat{U}, \hat{\chi}e^{i\frac{\theta+2\pi k}{n}}), \quad (10)$$

which is not necessarily true in general and it will be taken as a *definition* of the $Z_{\text{chiral}}(n)$ -symmetric phase. The effective Lagrangian exhibiting $Z_{\text{chiral}}(n)$ -symmetry consists of two parts, $\mathcal{L} = \mathcal{L}_1 + \mathcal{L}_2$. \mathcal{L}_1 has the whole continuous $U_A(1)$ symmetry, $\hat{\chi} \rightarrow e^{i\alpha}\hat{\chi}$, i.e. it is independent of the θ angle,

$$\mathcal{L}_1 = \frac{F^2}{4} \left\{ \langle D_\mu \hat{U} D^\mu \hat{U}^\dagger \rangle + Z \langle \hat{U}^\dagger \hat{\chi} \rangle \langle \hat{\chi}^\dagger \hat{U} \rangle + \dots \right\}, \quad (11)$$

where dots stand for pure source and higher orders terms. \mathcal{L}_2 consists of terms which break $U_A(1)$ down to $Z_{\text{chiral}}(n)$. The lowest order term with this property reads

$$\mathcal{L}_2 = \sum_{k=1}^{n-1} \sum_{\{j_1 \dots j_k\}} A_{\{j_1 \dots j_k\}}^{(k)} \langle (\hat{U}^\dagger \hat{\chi})^{j_1} \rangle \dots \langle (\hat{U}^\dagger \hat{\chi})^{j_k} \rangle + \text{h.c.},$$

where $j_1, \dots, j_k = 1, \dots, n, \quad j_1 + \dots + j_k = n.$ (12)

Despite the fact that the Lagrangians (11) and (12) are of different orders in $\hat{\chi}$ they can coexist, since they describe two independent sectors of the effective theory: Eq. (12) is *holomorphic* and is not renormalized by loops arising from the $U(1)$ -invariant sector as represented by Eq. (11). Eq. (12) becomes more transparent using Eqs. (3)-(4) and expanding in powers of the light quark masses χ . Denoting by W the 3×3 matrix and by ζ the phase factor,

$$W = U^\dagger \chi e^{-i\frac{\varphi}{3}}, \quad \zeta = e^{i\frac{\theta+\varphi}{N}}, \quad (13)$$

Eq. (12) can be rewritten as

$$\begin{aligned} \mathcal{L}_2 = & a_n (M\zeta)^n + b_n \langle W \rangle (M\zeta)^{n-1} + c_n \langle W^2 \rangle (M\zeta)^{n-2} \\ & + d_n \langle W \rangle^2 (M\zeta)^{n-2} + \text{h.c.} + \mathcal{O}(W^3). \end{aligned} \quad (14)$$

Similarly, the reduction $SU(n) \rightarrow SU(3) \times U(1)$ of the component \mathcal{L}_1 can be expressed in terms of the variables (13) as

$$\begin{aligned} \mathcal{L}_1 = & \frac{F^2}{4} \left\{ \langle D_\mu U^\dagger D^\mu U \rangle + \frac{n}{3N} \partial_\mu \varphi \partial^\mu \varphi \right. \\ & \left. + MNZ \langle W \zeta^\dagger + W^\dagger \zeta \rangle + Z \langle W^\dagger \rangle \langle W \rangle \right\} + \dots \end{aligned} \quad (15)$$

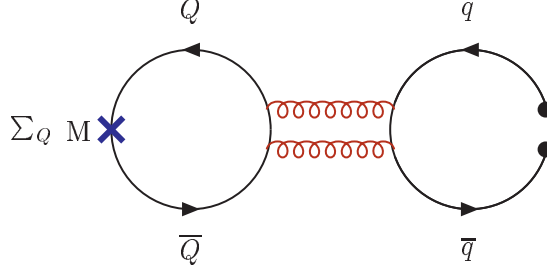


FIG. 1. Representation of the contribution to the induced condensate Eq. (17). The cross refers to $\bar{Q}Q$ insertion.

In the tree approximation the η' -mass merely arises from the holomorphic part \mathcal{L}_2 , ($m_u = m_d = m_s = 0$),

$$M_{\eta'}^2 = \frac{12N}{n} \frac{1}{F^2} a_n M^n. \quad (16)$$

In contrast to the $Z_{\text{chiral}}(n)$ -asymmetric phase, [cf. Eq. (1)], which contains a genuine condensate term B_0 , such a term is absent in the $Z_{\text{chiral}}(n)$ -symmetric phase. However, in the reduction (3)-(4), an *induced condensate* appears through the OZI violation terms [see Fig. (1)] (the $Z_{\text{chiral}}(n)$ -symmetry is explicitly broken by the Q -mass term),

$$F^2 B_{\text{induced}} = \frac{1}{2} F^2 M N Z + 2b_n M^{n-1}, \quad (17)$$

where the first term on the r.h.s. arises from \mathcal{L}_1 , whereas the second term comes from the holomorphic Lagrangian. The quadratic terms in W of Eq. (14) contribute to the subleading low-energy constants L_6, L_7, L_8 [9], denoted by hat

$$\begin{aligned} B_{\text{induced}}^2(\hat{L}_6 - \hat{L}_7) &= \frac{1}{32} F^2 Z, \\ B_{\text{induced}}^2 \hat{L}_8 &= \frac{1}{4} c_n M^{n-2}, \\ B_{\text{induced}}^2(\hat{L}_6 + \hat{L}_7) &= \frac{1}{4} d_n M^{n-2}. \end{aligned} \quad (18)$$

4. We now turn to the leading behavior of all these induced low-energy constants in the combined large- N limit. We consider (connected) correlators of quark bilinears $\bar{\Psi}\Gamma\Psi$.

Usual large- N_c counting rules are maintained. In addition, every quark loop gives rise to a *flavor trace* involving all flavor matrices contained in that loop. Consequently, each internal (“sea”) quark loop will be *enhanced* by a factor $N_f = n$ and suppressed (as usual) by a factor $1/N_c$. (However, if a quark loop is *valence*, i.e. attached to an external flavor source, it will not lead to a flavor-enhancement factor.) In particular, the constants F^2 and Z in Eq. (11) behave as $F^2 \sim N$ and $Z \sim 1/N$. The contribution to the fermionic determinant can be formally written (in a large Euclidean box) like

$$\Delta = \exp \sum_k \log \left(1 + \frac{\lambda_k^2 - \omega_k^2}{\omega_k^2 + M^2} \right)^n, \quad (19)$$

where λ_k are Dirac operator eigenvalues and ω_k the corresponding eigenvalues in the absence of interactions. Hence at large- N_c one expects $\lambda_k^2 - \omega_k^2 \sim \mathcal{O}(g^2) \sim \mathcal{O}(1/N_c)$. This illustrates the mechanism by which the fermionic determinant stays non trivial and finite in the combined large- N limit, merely depending on the ratio N_f/N_c . The large- N counting of the holomorphic part is more subtle: we deal with a large- N_f , large- N_c behavior of a large- N -point function. In the tree approximation, the holomorphic part of the Lagrangian (at $\hat{U} = \mathbf{1}$) is connected with a QCD correlation function in a Euclidean finite volume V

$$\begin{aligned} -\mathcal{L}_2(\mathbf{1}, \hat{\chi}) &= - \sum_k^{n-1} \sum_{\{j_1 \dots j_k\}} A_{\{j_1 \dots j_k\}}^{(k)} \langle \hat{\chi}^{j_1} \rangle \dots \langle \hat{\chi}^{j_k} \rangle \\ &= \frac{1}{n!} \frac{1}{V} \left\langle \left[\int dx \bar{\Psi}_L \hat{\chi} \Psi_R(x) \right]^n \right\rangle_{\text{con}}. \end{aligned} \quad (20)$$

The average on r.h.s. of Eq. (20) can be evaluated at non zero masses m and M . The other chirality part $\bar{\Psi}_R \Psi_L$ will contribute but *not* to the lowest order $\hat{\chi}^n$ of the holomorphic part of the Lagrangian. Let us introduce the notation

$$\begin{aligned} K &= \int dx \sum_{i=1}^N \bar{Q}_L^i(x) Q_R^i(x), \\ k_i &= \int dx \bar{q}_{iL}(x) q_{iR}(x), \quad i = 1, 2, 3. \end{aligned} \quad (21)$$

Choosing in Eq. (20) $\hat{\chi} = \text{diag}(m_1, m_2, m_3, M, \dots, M)$, and combining it with Eq. (14) one gets

$$- \left\{ a_n M^n + b_n M^{n-1} (m_1 + m_2 + m_3) \right.$$

$$\begin{aligned}
& + \left[c_n(m_1^2 + m_2^2 + m_3^2) + d_n(m_1 + m_2 + m_3)^2 \right] M^{n-2} \\
& + \dots \} = \frac{1}{n!} \frac{1}{V} \langle (MK + m_1 k_1 + m_2 k_2 + m_3 k_3)^n \rangle_{\text{con}}.
\end{aligned} \tag{22}$$

Comparing the coefficients of M^n

$$a_n M^n = -\frac{1}{n!} M^n \frac{1}{V} \langle K^n \rangle_{\text{con}}. \tag{23}$$

The single quark loop contribution to Eq. (23) reads

$$\begin{aligned}
\frac{1}{V} \langle K^n \rangle &= -(n-1)! \frac{1}{V} \langle \langle \int dx_1 \dots dx_n \text{Tr} \{ S^{RL}(x_1, x_2) \\
& S^{RL}(x_2, x_3) \dots S^{RL}(x_n, x_1) \} \rangle \rangle \text{Tr}(\mathbf{1}_{N \times N}),
\end{aligned} \tag{24}$$

where $S^{RL}(x, y)$ denotes the chiral part of the fermion propagator

$$S^{RL}(x, y) = \left(\frac{1 + \gamma_5}{\sqrt{2}} \right) \sum_{\lambda_k \geq 0} \frac{M}{M^2 + \lambda_k^2} \varphi_k(x) \varphi_k^\dagger(y) \left(\frac{1 + \gamma_5}{\sqrt{2}} \right)$$

in terms of the orthonormal Fujikawa chiral basis [10] (φ_k is the Dirac eigenvector belonging to the eigenvalue λ_k) and $\langle \langle \dots \rangle \rangle$ stands for the average over gluon configurations with insertion of fermionic determinant. The factor $(n-1)!$ in Eq. (24) counts the different ways of connecting n points by a single *one quark loop*. In fact a closer examination of the combinatorics of multiloop diagrams' contributions to $\langle K^n \rangle$ in Eq. (24) reveals that none of them is more important than the one with the least number of quark loops. The integrals in Eq. (24) can be performed with the result

$$a_n M^n \sim \lim_{\substack{V \rightarrow \infty \\ n \rightarrow \infty}} \frac{1}{V} \langle \langle \sum_{\lambda_k \geq 0} \left(1 + \frac{\lambda_k^2}{M^2} \right)^{-n} \rangle \rangle. \tag{25}$$

Even if we do not consider here the chiral limit $M \rightarrow 0$, the behavior of Eq. (25) is merely controlled by the average density of small Dirac eigenvalues. Indeed, for any fixed M and (arbitrary small) ϵ the eigenvalues $\lambda_k^2 \geq \epsilon$ do not contribute to the large- N limit of Eq. (25). The latter should be of the order of the average number of states \mathcal{N}_ϵ with $\lambda_k^2 \leq \epsilon$. On general grounds one expects $\mathcal{N}_\epsilon \sim V N_c$ [11]. (The density of states should grow proportionally with N_c .) Hence, in the combined large- N limit $a_n M^n \sim \mathcal{O}(N_c)$ and according to Eq. (16)

$$M_{\eta'}^2 \sim \text{const} , \quad (26)$$

thus not suppressed anymore. Similar conclusions have been reached also in different contexts [12,13]. The remaining coefficients in Eq. (22) can be found similarly:

$$b_n M^{n-1} \sim -\frac{M^{n-1}}{(n-1)!} \frac{1}{V} \langle K^{n-1} k_1 \rangle_{\text{con}} , \quad (27)$$

$$(c_n + d_n) M^{n-2} \sim -\frac{M^{n-2}}{(n-2)!} \frac{1}{V} \langle K^{n-2} k_1^2 \rangle_{\text{con}} , \quad (28)$$

receiving leading contribution from at least two quark loops and consequently suppressed by $1/N_c$ relative to Eq. (25). Finally

$$d_n M^{n-2} \sim -\frac{M^{n-2}}{(n-2)!} \frac{1}{V} \langle K^{n-2} k_1 k_2 \rangle_{\text{con}} , \quad (29)$$

which involves at least three quark loops. This leads to the final estimate

$$b_n M^{n-1} \sim c_n M^{n-2} \sim \mathcal{O}(1) , \quad d_n M^{n-2} \sim \mathcal{O}(1/N_c) . \quad (30)$$

As a consequence, the holomorphic contribution to the induced condensate, Eq. (17), is suppressed relative to the non-holomorphic one. The latter is given by the OZI rule violating constant Z which is suppressed by $1/N_c$ but this suppression is compensated by a flavor enhancement factor $N = n - 3$. As a result

$$F^2 B_{\text{induced}} \sim \mathcal{O}(N) + \mathcal{O}(1) , \quad (31)$$

where the first term is the non-holomorphic and the second one the holomorphic contribution. For the tree contribution quoted in Eq. (18) the large- N counting reads

$$\begin{aligned} B_{\text{induced}}^2 (\hat{L}_6 - \hat{L}_7) &\sim B_{\text{induced}}^2 \hat{L}_8 \sim \mathcal{O}(1) , \\ B_{\text{induced}}^2 (\hat{L}_6 + \hat{L}_7) &\sim \mathcal{O}(1/N) . \end{aligned} \quad (32)$$

5. More comments on the large- N behavior of the η' -mass are in order. The usual argument for finding the behavior of the η' -mass [2] derives from the necessity to cancel

the θ -dependence of the pure gluodynamics when massless quarks are added. This is only possible when the $1/N_c$ suppression of the internal quark loops is compensated by the η' -pole contribution $M_{\eta'}^{-2}$. This leads to the Veneziano-Witten's formula and the vanishing of $M_{\eta'}^2$ as $1/N_c$. On the other hand, in the combined large- N limit internal quark loops are not suppressed, and it is not possible to isolate pure glue contributions by large- N arguments. As a consequence the η' -mass does not vanish anymore and its relation to the topological susceptibility is lost. We may as well consider the η' -field as heavy and integrate it out. At tree level this amounts to the shift in the constant L_7

$$L_7 = \hat{L}_7 - \frac{F^2}{48M_{\eta'}^2}, \quad L_i = \hat{L}_i, \quad (i \neq 7), \quad (33)$$

as it is seen by evaluating the singlet minus octet pseudoscalar two-point function [14].

6. Let us summarize the results of this work. We have asked whether the combined large- N limit (as defined in this paper) helps understanding the peculiar properties of QCD in the vacuum and η' -channels. *(i)* In the scalar channel, this limit suggests a flavor enhancement of the OZI rule violation, leading in particular to the emergence of an *induced quark condensate* [Eq. (17)] on top of the genuine condensate B_0 [c.f. Eq. (1)]. In the large N_f/N_c phase in which the genuine condensate is forbidden due to the $Z_{\text{chiral}}(n)$ -symmetry, the induced condensate plays the rôle of B_0 in describing chiral symmetry breaking. An induced condensate would manifest itself by an important flavor dependence [as in Eq. (17)] and it could be, in principle, disentangled from B_0 in this way [3]. *(ii)* A distinctive feature of the $Z_{\text{chiral}}(n)$ -symmetric phase is the non-vanishing η' -mass in the combined large- N limit. (Since this phase is expected for large N_f/N_c , the usual large- N_c , fixed- N_f arguments do not apply.) In particular, the relation of the $M_{\eta'}$ to the axial anomaly and to the topological susceptibility of the pure YM theory are now modified. *(iii)* The place of the scale M in building η' -mass, induced condensate and the low-energy constants L_6, L_7 and L_8 is important and not entirely understood. Special attention should be paid to the rôle of M in the low-energy expansion and in the renormalization of the whole effective theory. We have

calculated the one-loop contribution to all the above mentioned quantities. Qualitatively, they do not modify any of our conclusions.

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